Stand Up, Socialist!

Gustav Landauer

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Socialism is a matter of the conduct and behaviour of people, but first of all the conduct and behaviour of socialists: from the living relationships of economy and community which they create among themselves. Evolving socialism lives only in people when it lives out of them. Nature and spirit do not let themselves be derided or put off for another day: what shall become, must grow; what shall grow, must begin in embryo; and what the beginners see as a matter for humanity, they must begin for the sake of their own humanity and as if it were for themselves alone. Is it not wondrous? Socialism is an image of the beholders, who see before them, clear and beckoning, the possibility of total transformation; it begins however as the deeds of the doers, who remove themselves from the whole as it is now to save their souls, in order to serve their God.

To be socialists appears to mean nothing other than our lucid insight that the world, the spirits, the souls could be wholly changed if the social bases were changed (and anarchism adds to this, that the new bases should be such that they, like every growing organism, unite within themselves stability and renewal, cosmic and chaotic powers, the principle of preservation and the principal of revolution). We are intent for a while - for a long while - on nothing other than heralding this great work to the people, and demanding it of them. In the end what comes to light is that in this realization of the intellect [Geist], what is essential is not its content, but rather the posture and orientation of the spirit [Geist] itself. The essential in socialism is its productivity, its will to reshape the world. Out of the recognition that the people of our time are products of their conditions, comes to true socialists the will and necessity not to let themselves be beaten down, but rather to productively create new conditions for their lives. Socialism unites within itself the ability to grasp, through experience, the nature of a social norm, with the will to overcome it; the recognition of being bound and controlled by a degrading state of affairs was already the first step towards liberation from this bondage.

For two decades there has been fear even of this truth, that socialism is the power of creativity and of sacrifice, that it requires religious intensity and heroism, that in the beginning it is the work of the few; the fear that every productive individual knows, fear of the daemonic that seizes the weak soul in the weak body, forces it out of its boundaries, and sends it on the path of accomplishment. This fear of the deed [Werkangst] on the part of those called to creation has warped the productive efforts of socialism into a theory ofthe laws of development, and the political party [the German Social Democratic Party] relying on it. And all that industrious nature [Wesen] was irrelevant [unwesentlich]; and all that talking and hustle and bustle about

extraneous diversions was the timid excuse of those who, hearing themselves called by their God, cowered down like gnomes behind the hedge formed of their preoccupation with their fear [Angstbeschaftigung].

There is nothing left to do but get back on our feet and put the destination in our methods. The world, in which the spirit builds itself the body, has even in the machine age by no means become mechanistic. The miracle in which superstition believes, the miracle that materialism and mechanism assume-that the great thing comes without great effort and that fully-grown socialism grows not out of the childhood beginnings of socialism, but out of the colossal deformed body of capita!ism - this miracle will not come, and soon people will no longer believe in it. Socialism begins with the act of the socialist, the act that will be all the harder, the smaller the number of those who dare and want to try. Who else shall do what he has recognized to be right, other than the recognizer himself? We are at all times dependent and at all times free. We are in no way damned to temporary idleness and waiting - merely making propaganda, and making demands. There is a great deal we can do, that a united band can set up and carry out, if it does not shrink back from efforts, problems, persecution, and ridicule. Finally give yourself up to your task, socialist! Given that a beginning will not come any other way, you need-for the masses, for the peoples, for humanity, for the turning around of history, for decency in economic relationships, community living, between the sexes [Geschlechter] and in upbringing - at first not the broad masses, but rather only companions. They are here today, as they are always here, if you are only here: the task is there, but you do not follow your calling, you let yourself wait. If you join yourselves together, and pace out the boundaries of the realm that is at this moment possible for your small growing band of companions, you will become aware: there is no end to what is possible.

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